

EUS MORTON TELLS HIS STORY

The following address was made by Mr. Gus A. Morton at the court house in Ocala on Wednesday night. It tells why he and Mr. Stockton came to the "parting of the ways."

My Fellow Citizens:

In 1899 I had a contract with the Coweta Fertilizer Manufacturing Company of Newnan, Georgia, to ship it quite a lot of what is known in the phosphate world as low grade rock. This rock I shipped from the Welsh district, about eight miles south of Ocala. I made a good margin and the Coweta people were so well satisfied that they gave me more orders to fill. That section of the country being exhausted in the kind of material I was selling, moved to what was then known as Standard 1, four miles south of Archer in Levy county, known as Eve, where I continued to ship the same class of rock, increasing my business and not only working up rock in the Standard 1, section, but also at the Bailey Mine, or what is generally known as the McCorkle Homestead, belonging at the time to the Dutton Phosphate Company.

It was while shipping this rock that I first met Mr. Stockton, who was out trying to locate or buy a deposit of high grade rock (phosphate) for mining purposes, and he remarked to me that "you seem to have a good thing in the low grade phosphate business, and after discussing the phosphate business and the various localities, he told me if I could locate a deposit of phosphate that he thought was of sufficient quantity to justify erecting a phosphate plant upon, that he would give me one-fourth interest in the same for so doing. I told him I would commence trying to locate same at once and if I found just such a deposit as he described or wanted, would inform him.

After looking over and prospecting quite a scope of country, not only in Levy county, but Marion and Citrus as well, and carefully summing up the different deposits that I had investigated, I was favorably impressed with the promising outlook at Standard 1 or Eve. And after doing some prospecting on my own account, enough to satisfy me that I had a good thing, I secured an option on the property, as to secure my discovery, and advised Mr. Stockton that I had something for him to look at. He came down and I went over the various properties very carefully. And after more prospecting on his own account, he informed me that it was what he was looking for and wanted. In the meantime the finding of the deposit was known all over the high grade phosphate belt, and I received some flattering offers to sell outright, which would have given me quite a profit above option price. But thinking and after several months' fourth interest in a good phosphate plant on a good deposit was a thing I desired, I refused these offers to sell and closed the deal with Mr. Stockton on the basis of a one-quarter interest to me.

In the meantime Mr. Stockton desired to come in as a partner in the low grade rock business, and thinking perhaps it would be best, as we were now partners in the high grade, that we might as well be partners in both, I told him inasmuch as we were going to work the high grade business together, that I would not charge him anything for my experience or options in the low grade phosphate business, but if he would pay for one-half of my tools on hand, such as wheelbarrows, shovels, screens, picks, etc., he could come in. So he paid me \$100 for half of the same, and became my partner in that business also.

About this time the Levy County Phosphate Company was organized and capitalized with \$50,000 stock. J. N. C. Stockton president, \$25,000 stock, J. E. Bryan, secretary and treasurer, \$12,500 stock, and myself, \$12,500 stock, general manager, \$12,500 stock.

Mr. Stockton issued the stock. I do not know whether Mr. Bryan ever came into possession of his stock or not. I understand he was not in the division of the stock, but that Mr. Stockton told me that he had put my part, \$12,500, in his safe, and that I could get it later on.

All the property we had secured was turned into the Levy County Phosphate Company, and among other properties we purchased was the Live Oak Company's machinery, which consisted of a complete phosphate washer, boilers, engines, pit cars and everything pertaining to mining phosphate, also three and one-half to four miles of railroad iron. The machinery was shipped to Eve, to be used in building and operating our plant. The railroad iron was sold to Dyal-Upchurch & Company, and to the F. C. & P. R. R. Mr. Stockton told me that the profits on the railroad iron paid for the whole outfit, and left a margin of profit, besides having the machinery as a clear profit. We also bought a small deposit of phosphate from the late James P. DePass, and sold it without expense at a net profit of \$600, which was placed to the credit of our company.

The company also purchased a piece of property at Montbrook, which we erected a screen washer to mine low grade rock, and from which property we mined at small cost between two and three thousand tons of rock, which was sold to the Home Mixture Goods Company of Columbus, Ga., the profits being passed to the credit of our company.

Our plant at Eve being now about completed, we commenced mining high grade rock for export trade, which industry we carried on very successfully. It is said that either whiskey or politics indulged in to excess will ruin any man. It must have been the latter that Mr. Stockton ran up against, for no sooner had he entered into the United States senatorial race against Mr. J. P. Tallaferra than money began to get scarce, and he came to me before the first primary and told me he was very hard pressed for money to carry on the campaign, and unless he could get help financially, it looked dark to him.

I was shouting "Stockton for the United States senate" wherever I went and to whoever I was with and when I could get anybody to talk to—got on the stump and shouted "Stockton! Stockton!" My confidence in the man was very great. His integrity and honesty I did not doubt, yet I had been told that his partners in all his transactions got the partnership and he the money, but my friendship was of the Damon and Pythias variety, if it should have become necessary. So I asked him how much money it would take to pull him through, and he said if he had from \$500 to \$10,000 he would be able to defeat J. P. Tallaferra in the first primary, hands down. I told him I had a friend whom I thought I could influence to loan us (The Levy County Phosphate Company) the money. I went to see my friend and after some persuasion he agreed to loan the Levy County Phosphate Company and I loan us \$10,000. Mr. Stockton gave the Levy County Phosphate Company's note, by J. N. C. Stockton, president, for the same. Mr. Stockton got the money.

Later on, after Mr. Stockton's defeat, this with other papers became due. He came down to the mine, the place where the "goose had laid the golden egg," turned off the commissary man, went behind the counter himself, waiting day and night over his recent defeat. I was on the outside doing all I possibly could do to stem the financial troubles and keep him cheerful as \$10,000 or even \$15,000 papers can be taken care of. Larger amounts are more troublesome. I did not know about anything but the loan. One day he called me into the commissary office and told me he saw but one thing to do, and that was to go into bankruptcy. I told him that would never do as that would mean a sacrifice of the property, but that if I was so hopelessly in debt, if he would agree, I thought I could find a purchaser for the Levy County Phosphate Company's property. He agreed that if I could do so it would solve the problem. In a short while I had a deal of money, and the Dutton Phosphate Company for the property.

The Dutton Phosphate Company agreed to purchase and did purchase and pay to Mr. Stockton, as president of the Levy County Phosphate Company, \$72,000; the consideration for payment was the transfer of them all of the property of the Levy County Phosphate Company of every nature and kind, including all real estate, mules, wagons and implements owned or in possession of the company, except the stock of goods in the commissary.

On September 17, 1904, the deal was closed, the deed was made out and executed in Jacksonville, Fla., by Mr. Stockton, as president, and he came down to Gainesville and delivered the deeds to the Dutton Phosphate Company, and received the money on September 21, 1904, the Dutton Phosphate Company taking possession on September 22, 1904, retaining me as superintendent.

On September 21, when Mr. Dale, bookkeeper for the Dutton Phosphate Company, was making up the accounts and checks in payment of the money, he informed me, on my asking, that no provision had been made to pay me anything. I immediately called Mr. Stockton, who was present, into an adjoining room, and there, to my astonishment, he informed me that I was to get nothing out of the sale, and declared then and there that he would go into bankruptcy before he would pay J. E. Bryan and myself, (the other stockholders in the company) one dollar. After a very heated argument between us, he paid me, against his will, \$1000, which was all I could get out of him.

I had had such absolute and unbounded confidence in the man that his attitude in this business was almost sufficient to destroy my belief in human honesty. I remained with the Dutton Phosphate Company for about two years, and after severing my connection with them I moved to Williston, where I still reside.

Among other pieces of property that we purchased for the Levy County Phosphate Company, and which we used and which we sold to the Dutton Phosphate Company under the same name, was one piece of property which I purchased from Mr. Minor M. Sistrunk for the company, Mr. Sistrunk making the deed to the Levy County Phosphate Company for the land, which deed was dated the 5th day of May, 1902, properly executed and acknowledged on that date, and delivered to Mr. Stockton as president of the company; and another piece of property, or land which we purchased from Mr. Zetrouer. Both of these pieces were used by us and sold by us in the transfer to the Dutton Phosphate Company, as above stated.

As superintendent for the Dutton Phosphate Company after the transfer, I used these pieces of land for them in various ways. Some time after the transfer to the Dutton Phosphate Company, I was informed, while working a piece of track across one of these pieces of land for the Dutton Phosphate Company, that some controversy had arisen between them—Mr. Stockton and the Dutton Phosphate Company—as to the ownership of the Zetrouer piece of land, and that the deed of the county records was then carefully made, when it was ascertained that there was no deed on record to the Levy County Phosphate Company of either the Zetrouer piece of land or the Sistrunk land, but that the deed to the Zetrouer piece of land was in the name of Mr. Stockton, and was so recorded. There was no deed on record of the Sistrunk land. Some time afterwards I discovered that a deed had been placed on record of the Sistrunk land in the name of J. N. C. Stockton. Both of these tracts of land, as I have before stated, were bought by and were the property of the Levy County Phosphate Company, and went in the transfer to the Dutton Phosphate Company, though it appeared afterwards that they had not been mentioned in the deed, as in making up the deed they did not appear on record in the name of our company.

Upon these facts coming to my knowledge, I proceeded to investigate the matter, and the following is a correct statement of the facts:

1. The Zetrouer lands were purchased by the Levy County Phosphate Company and sold to the Dutton Phosphate Company in the transfer and were used by them, though the deed was taken in Mr. Stockton's name and which was not discovered until afterwards, and why, Mr. Stockton will have to explain.

2. The Sistrunk land was purchased by me from Minor M. Sistrunk and his wife for the Levy County Phosphate Company, and on April 30, 1902, after I had negotiated the purchase with Mr. Sistrunk at Montbrook, Fla., where he lived from time to time, I gave him from time to time the deed for the land to the Levy County Phosphate Company, and forwarded the same with draft to Mr. Stockton, president of the company, and Mr. Stockton received it. He being president and financial manager, lived in Jacksonville. I was simply manager of the works at Eve. This deed, however, Mr. Stockton never recorded, but kept the same, and on the 24th day of September, 1904, three days after we had made the sale to the Dutton Phosphate Company, and Mr. Stockton had received the money for the purchase, as above stated, Mr. Stockton took the old deed to Mr. Minor M. Sistrunk at Montbrook, and stated to Mr. Sistrunk that there was an error in the deed. He got Mr. Sistrunk and his wife, against Mr. Sistrunk's better judgment, to execute an entirely new deed to the property bearing the same date as the old deed. The only change made therein being that instead of the deed being made to the Levy County Phosphate Company, as the first one had been, Mr. Stockton had his own name inserted therein. It was acknowledged on the 24th day of September, 1904, before Frank C. Crawford, and recorded July 14th, 1906, in the public records of Levy county.

Mr. Stockton delivered up to Mr. Sistrunk the old deed, Mr. Sistrunk in-

sisting upon that, and after Mr. Stockton got the new deed he tried to persuade Mr. Sistrunk to destroy the old deed, but this Mr. Sistrunk refused to do, and kept the old deed in his possession. These facts are easily established by Mr. Minor M. Sistrunk of Montbrook, who will testify to the same, and by the date of acknowledgment and record of the new deed, a certified copy of which I have in my possession.

The whole plant, lands and property which we had put into the Levy County Phosphate Company amounted in total to the sum of \$22,375, and in selling the same to the Dutton Phosphate Company for \$72,000 we had made a clear profit of \$49,625—my share amounting of which was \$9962.50, and of which Mr. Stockton never paid me but \$1000 as mentioned above. About one year prior to the sale of the Levy County Phosphate Company, I had lost my boy. Mr. Stockton was at my place shortly afterwards, and seeing me in a very dejected shape, he put his hand on my shoulder, and affecting a great deal of sympathy for me, to my surprise, kissed me on the forehead. After the sale of the property and I had demanded settlement with Mr. Stockton, he said that sooner or later those who did not do right in their hands were punished, and that the death of my boy was a punishment to me.

Let it be remembered that during all the years between 1899 until we sold out in 1904 to the Dutton Phosphate Company, having unbounded faith and confidence in Mr. Stockton, I had worked ceaselessly to build up the plant and property, and increase, as I thought, my one-fourth interest in the same and in the profits which were being made, on the beggarly pittance of \$15 per week.

I had obtained an loan for Mr. Stockton of \$10,000, allowing him to pledge my own interests in the Levy County Phosphate Company to help Mr. Stockton in his political campaign, when, according to his own statement, he was without money and could not go any further. I had afterwards obtained a further loan for him of \$2000 additional when that had been expended. I had used some of my own money and time in advocating his candidacy and in trying to elect him.

It is unnatural that I should have lost confidence in the man and felt hurt and humiliated at his want of gratitude to the man who had befriended him, but it may be said that this was to a great extent a personal matter between Mr. Stockton and myself, and to a certain extent that is true, and it had never been my purpose to mention it, and I should not have done so had I not discovered some years afterwards that Mr. Stockton, for the purpose of getting hold of a beggarly little twenty acres of land that was purchased from Mr. Sistrunk, had imposed not only upon me to a further extent, but upon the Dutton Phosphate Company, and Mr. Sistrunk himself, in order to get that land in his own name, by having the deed changed, as I have before stated. This action raises it above a personal matter. It makes it a matter in which not only myself but the Dutton Phosphate Company, Mr. Sistrunk and all the people of this state, to whom Mr. Stockton is now appealing for votes, are interested in, a transaction which cannot be justified under any claim or alleged claim which Mr. Stockton could set up. Once Mr. Sistrunk had made the deed of that property to the Levy County Phosphate Company and that deed had been delivered, there was no power that could take that property away from the Levy County Phosphate Company, except by a deed executed by it or a suit in the courts, and Mr. Stockton's attempt by the sale of the property to his own name is what lawyers would call in plain language a fraud, if brought before the court, and the people of this state should know and put their stamp of disapproval upon such proceedings.

I was trying to forget my personal share of the money in this transaction when Mr. Stockton entered the race as a candidate for governor. When I saw his photographs spread broadcast all over the land, claiming to be the people's candidate and the working man's friend, claiming to be the enemy of monopoly and to really read his platform, knowing his insincerity, when my mind reverted to the fact that the Levy County Phosphate Company had been organized with a capital of \$50,000 of stock, only \$12,000 of which was paid in, and having watered the amount to \$38,000, I could not help but come to the front and tell the people of these transactions, in order that they might see clearly what Mr. Stockton actually thinks of the working class; how sincere Mr. Stockton is in his opposition to monopoly, how earnest he is shown by these transactions, he looks after the interests of his friends to the detriment of himself. I did not take any snap judgment of Mr. Stockton. I did not give this to the voters of the state for their consideration, but to the people of this state, and to Mr. Stockton, advising him that on the 17th of April I would speak at Gainesville on matters affecting his interests and requesting him to be present. I had a copy of this letter put in the Gainesville Sun, about the time that of that date I mailed this letter to Mr. Stockton, addressed to Jacksonville, and a copy of the same to his partner, so that there would be no mistake about his getting it or having notice. Mr. Stockton did not appear at Gainesville at the time stated, and in a public meeting held there in the court house before the representative citizens of that place I made a speech in which I referred to the facts here stated by me. Mr. Stockton has never replied to this, either by denial or otherwise, except at Williston the other day a few moments before he took the train and gave me no time for a reply, though I was present. He said that he had received a letter, but thought it was a joke on my part, and that he did not owe me a cent. But far from this being a joke, I am stating to you the facts. I am in a dead, cold earnest about the matter. If he did not owe me anything I would like to ask him what has become of my \$12,500 worth of stock which he said he had issued to me, but which I have never gotten, and what has become of my share of the profits in the business, and my interests in it for which it was sold, and for which I had a written contract from Mr. Stockton, signed by Mr. Bryan, Mr. Stockton and myself, the original copy of which I have in my possession, and which anybody can inspect.

Mr. Stockton affects to treat the matter lightly. He is living in luxury and rides in an automobile; I am living in a rented house. He has money and poses as the people's candidate and the savior of the people's interests; I have to earn what I get, and occasionally to borrow when I can. He appeals to the people; so do I. He is Mr. Stockton of Duval county; I am simply Gus Morton. Take the matter home to yourselves and judge between us. Here are the facts substantiated by written documents, by affidavits, by the testimony of witnesses, which you can inspect. If there was nothing else in the transaction but Mr. Stockton's fraud in the changing of the Sistrunk deed, it would be sufficient excuse for placing that fact before the voters. I

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ask the people of the state of Florida, to whom Mr. Stockton is appealing for votes, to consider these questions; to consider whether a man who has been false to his friends and false to his business interests, can deal justly with the people of a state, and with the vast power and property interests which would be placed in his hands if he were elected governor.

I ask the people to consider these matters on the 19th of May when you select and vote for your next governor. I do not know either of the other candidates, and I leave it to you to judge between them.

GUS A. MORTON.

A FISH DINNER

Mr. William H. Young, who travels for Harberson and Gathright, a large harness and saddlery establishment of Louisville, Ky., is a frequent visitor to Ocala, and who counts his friends here by the score.

If there is anything Capt. Young likes better than hunting and fishing he has not yet run up against it, and in the hunting season he spends as much as a week or ten days in the woods at a time.

The hunting season now being closed he sojourned himself this time with a night fish on the Oklawaha river, and to say that he enjoyed it is to state it mildly.

He had with him Mr. J. L. Smoak, Mr. Raymond B. Bullock and Mr. J. H. Livingston, Jr., congenial spirits in the piscatorial line.

They got to the river after the big shower and had supper with Mr. Hinton, and all of the party were singing its praises, and then they set off for their fish, and succeeded in landing a hundred pounds of as fine trout as was ever seen bunched together.

Capt. Young said the fish got frightened at the looks of the crowd and jumped on the banks and permitted themselves to be caught. "Anyway," he said, "like the young orator who wanted to quote a fine piece of poetry, but at the trying moment it escaped his memory, and he could get no further than: 'The poet said—well, he said—I don't know what he said; but he said it.'"

They were taken to Keating's cafe, and a number of friends were invited to enjoy a regular fish dinner, and it has been a long time since we so thoroughly enjoyed a dinner of any kind.

The fish were cooked in the most appetizing manner. There were baked fish, fried fish and stewed fish, with all the trimmings and belongings.

Those who were the guests of Capt. Young and enjoyed this splendid meal were Mr. Will Knight, Mr. J. L. Smoak, Mr. J. H. Livingston, Jr., Mr. Raymond B. Bullock, Mr. George Williams, Judge E. L. Smith of Fairfield, Mr. Carlos L. Sistrunk, Mr. A. T. Swartz and Mr. Frank Harris.

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